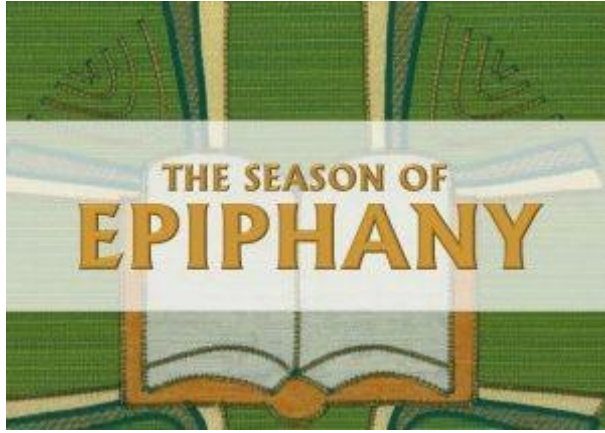


ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL
CHURCH 201 EAST CHURCH
STREET MARSHALLTOWN, IA
50158



FEBRUARY EPISTLE 2022

A Publication of St. Paul's Episcopal Church

St. Paul's Staff and Vestry Officers

The Head of the Church, Jesus Christ
The Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Betsey Monnot
Priest in Partnership, The Rev. Richard Graves
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Artist in Residence, Hudson Lourenço
Senior Warden, PJ Colbert
Junior Warden, Joyce Bayne
Clerk, Nick Yancey

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For further information, contact the church at 641-753-6317.

Bishop Monnot's Visitation in Pictures



On Sunday, January 30, we welcomed the Tenth Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa, The Right Reverend Betsey Monnot, to St. Paul's for her first visitation. She presided and preached at both of our services and offered a fine presentation after our 10:00 a.m. service that concerned the mission and ministry of every church.

Following her day with us, she posted the following on her Facebook Page: "Visitation with St. Paul's, Marshalltown, both services. They have an in-person at 10:00 a.m. and a Zoom at 5:00 p.m. Creative use of technology and liturgy interfacing together to provide worship for the community where and when they can access it. And delightful, friendly people at both!"

I trust you are as pleased as I am with our new Bishop and our efforts to welcome her to St. Paul's, and believe she will be a faithful pastor and shepherd to us in the years ahead. Do remember to pray for her daily, she would be the first to say how much she needs our prayers.

Sermon Preached by Fr. Richard
The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
6 February 2022
Saying What We Believe and Believing What We Say

Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life to you and ask you to come in as my Savior and Lord. Take control of my life. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be.

Are you at all familiar with this prayer, ever heard it, ever said it?

If you grew up in the Episcopal Church exclusively, you may be vaguely aware of it, but you have probably never spoken it.

This prayer, known as the Believer's Prayer, has never appeared in any of our Prayer Books going back to 1549, so if you have some familiarity with it, it was not because you encountered it in our traditions worship life, but through some other means.

As most of you know, I grew up simultaneously in the Episcopal Church and the American Baptist Church, and in the latter tradition this prayer was front and center, a mainstay in the life of the Baptist faithful.

When I look back to my years in the Baptist Church, I can think of two times this prayer came to the very forefront of my heart, soul, and mind, and even now when I recall them, they burst into my consciousness with the intensity and majesty of an exploding star.

The first was when I was baptized at the age 12 and stood before the congregation with my first cousin, Jim, and three other 12 year old's in white muslin gowns to offer our personal testimony.

We had just heard Dr. Kepner, our Pastor, give a sermon on the text from Isaiah that we heard this morning in our first reading (6:1-8). Known as the call of Isaiah, it vividly describes the experience that one of Israel's greatest prophets had while in the temple, his calling to serve God unreservedly and his acceptance of what God was asking of him with the words, "Here I am, send me."

Standing there with my peers in front of my family and the congregation, I sensed we all felt the pressure of God's presence and that God, in ways only known to God, would put us to use as our lives unfolded before us.

The second time occurred about a year after my baptism, at a Billy Graham crusade that was staged in the massive Los Angeles Coliseum. At the time, the outdoor sports venue held 100,000 and every permanent seat was occupied and the entire infield, which had been blanketed with white wooden folding chairs, was also packed.

The lone figure of Billy Graham standing on an end zone erected stage behind a pulpit dominated the scene. His thunderous voice, rich with southern drawl, pierced the night air like a spring lightning strike, as he presented the Good News of Jesus Christ with his characteristic clarity and conviction.

His sermon lasted at least an hour. And at its conclusion, Dr. Graham stretched his arms in a gathering pose and invited people who had not accepted Jesus to come from their seats and stand in front of the stage.

Many came, from every sector of the stadium. And when all had streamed down to the field, the great evangelist had them repeat after him, line by line, the Believer's Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want to know you personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life to you and ask you to come in as my Savior and Lord. Take control of my life. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be.

Both of my early experiences, my baptism, and Billy Graham's sermon-ending Altar Call, exemplify aspects of classic evangelicalism. In the evangelical tradition, a person being baptized first makes a public declaration of faith before entering the water; and sermons in this tradition end most typically with an altar call, an invitation to anyone to come forward and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Now while I have mentioned that our Prayer Book, which is our primary worship resource, does not have within its pages the Believers Prayer, it does give us opportunities to profess our faith as believers and disciples, responding to God's call to follow the Lord Jesus.

For example, at the heart of the service of Holy Baptism, the candidates and or their sponsors, standing before the congregation, are asked these questions: Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior? Do you put your whole trust in his grace and love? Do you promise to follow and obey him as your Lord? To each of these questions, the answer given is, "I do."

Moreover, in our weekly worship right after the sermon, we all profess our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed, a statement of faith that was written in the third century and has been regarded ever since by Christians everywhere as a definitive summary of our core beliefs as disciples of Jesus.

Christians are people who hold, nurture, and treasure a certain faith. When we say we believe, we are not saying we are agreeing with some abstract collection of spiritual ideas. Far from it. We're saying that our desires and deeds are guided by a loving God, the creator of all things and the giver of every perfect gift.

We're saying that this God has become flesh in Jesus Christ, who lived redemptively among us and loved us to the end. We're saying that a Spirit we call Holy is alive and working in our lives, insistently calling, and pulling and pushing us beyond our own small

worlds of self-concern to spread the good news of God's love and grace to the wider world.

And, we're saying that God has not forced us into our faith; we have freely chosen it and, indeed, stake our lives on it. God's word has gone out, whether spoken by a famous evangelist in a massive sports arena or in a quiet conversation between two souls in a country church, and we have heard it and accepted it.

And in accepting God's word, we not only believe certain things, but we live in hope of the fulfillment of God's promises of fruitfulness and abundance.

There is no real faith without hope. For faith, as the writer of the Book of Hebrews reminds us, is "the assurance the things hoped for,"

In our Gospel lesson from Luke (5:1-11), hope was what enabled Jesus' first disciples, Simon and James and John, to drop their nets to become fishers of people. Having witnessed the great haul of fish that Jesus had promised them, they left their lives and livelihoods to follow him. Like the boy Isaiah in the Temple, they took a great leap of faith, said yes. . . Here we are, Lord, send us. . . and you know what. . . their lives would never be the same again.

It all started with their small faltering freely taken first steps of becoming believers and acting on their beliefs.

And so it is with us. We have gathered here in faith not out of threat or coercion but because we want to be here. God has called us to be here.

Here is where we hear God's word. Here is where we are reminded of that moment or series of moments of our lives that have made us into the believers we are today, and it is here we renew our desire to follow along his pathway that leads not only to our own growth in holiness but also the building up of the Body of Christ.

One last thing. While the beginnings of faith start with the individual, with each soul saying yes, as Isaiah did in the Temple, we are sent out with others, just as Simon Peter and James and John were sent out in our gospel.

The command to follow is not a solitary pursuit, but a community enterprise. God does not intend us to remain isolated. As the evangelist Michael Spencer, Pastor of the Tabernacle Family Church in New York City likes to say, Discipleship is a call to "me," but it is a journey of "we." And so, we pray, the believer's prayer, but employ plural pronouns this time:

Lord Jesus, we want to know you personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for our sins. We open the door of our lives to you and ask you to come in as our Savior and Lord. Take control of our lives. Thank you for forgiving our sins and giving us eternal life. Make us the kind of persons you want us to be. Amen.

Prayer Requests

We pray for those who have requested our prayers: Ann, Butch Baer, Jamie Baggett, Sam Chizek, Ronnie Chizek, Jody Cochrane, Connie, Beth & Tom Costello, Cheryl, Joeann Finch, Glen Davis, Ruth Davis, Lyle Hamilton, Ellis & Colleen Harmon, Larry Hays, Samantha Helmick, Orlin and Sally Klinkefus, Kurt, Mark, Jessica McDanel, Annette Miley, Maria Ortiz, Joyce Ring, Linda Roberts & Family, Howard Stegmann, Frank Thomas, Sandy Vas, Maureen Wiley, Laci, Heather Ring, Mary Thomas, Sue Davis, Lily, Collette, Sarah Keller, Jason Kern & family, Amy Watson, the McInroy family, Jon Klinkefus family, Nan Ryden.

We pray for all those celebrating birthdays, especially Mary Jane Halsted, David Oakland, Janelle Carter, Mary Lou Tappe, Kay Beach, and Mary Jane Oakland, and for those observing anniversaries, especially and Ellis and Colleen Harmon and Roger and Jane Halleck.

We pray for the clergy and people of every parish in our diocese and offer special thanksgivings for the beginning of the ministry of our new Diocesan Bishop, the Reverend Betsy Monnot. We also pray for our companion dioceses of Nzara and Swaziland in Africa, and our companion diocese of Brechin in Eastern Scotland.

We pray for all who suffer under the weight of this pandemic and strength for those who labor for our health.

We pray for leaders in every community and nation, especially for Joseph, our President and Kimberly, our Governor, that they might seek justice, promote unity, and care for all those they serve.





ORLIN AND SALLY KLINKEFUS are moving to a new residence in Cedar Rapids on February 17 after living in their Marshalltown home for 53 years. Over this period, they have been tireless in their support of St. Paul's in the many ministry roles they have assumed: Vestry, Altar Guild, Lay Eucharistic Visitor, Lay Reader, Outreach, St. Margaret's Mission, Evangelism, Lay Pastoral Care, Christian Education, and so many more.

Orlin was a founder of the Bread Box, a feeding ministry that continues to serve clients in our city. While we will miss Orlin and Sally, they will continue to join us for our 5:00 p.m. Zoom service (thank God for technology). Their new contact information will become available via this newsletter in March.

May God bless these two great souls and continue to guide and watch over them always.

HOUSE OF COMPASSION SUPPER: Tuesday, February 8. Please arrive at 4:30 p.m.

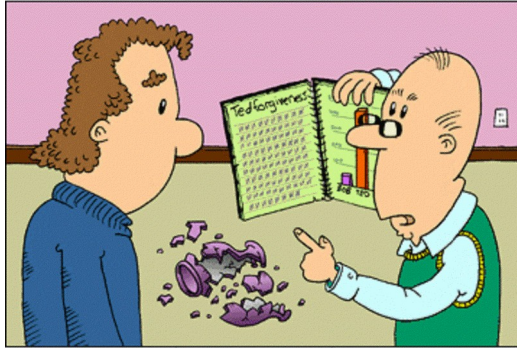
ANNUAL MEETING: Sunday, February 27, following the 10:00 a.m. service. There will be elections of the Vestry and of Diocesan delegates to Convention, a review of our 2021 and 2022 finances, and other reports about our ministry and mission. A hard copy of the 2021 Annual Report will also be available.

PLEDGES TO DATE: We exceeded our pledge budget for 2021 and are off to a great start in 2022. In January, we received \$4290 against a budget of \$3000. We do appreciate the gifts we receive for the mission and ministry of St. Paul's and make every effort to be good stewards of them – to the glory of God.

MEALS ON WHEELS: Every month of the year, Sheryl Readout and Glen Davis distribute nutritious meals to citizens of our community. This month, they will be making their deliveries on Wednesday, February 23.

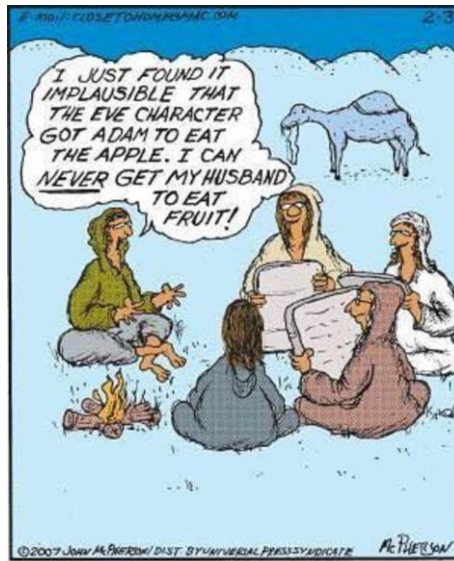
On the Lighter Side

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Thanks to Greg Ballos (See Matthew 18:21-35) 03-28-2002

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